FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
12-63G	ORLEANS	G	EAS.34

NR HD 2001

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*:
North Eastham

Address: 3070 State Highway

Historic Name: Smith – Brewer House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1831

Source: deeds, vital records

Style/Form: Federal/Cape Cod

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:
Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
Center chimney removed
Wing added, 20th c.

Condition: fair

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.56

Setting: The house is situated on the State Highway amid dense roadside development comprised of historic properties, more recent summer cottage development and civic and commercial buildings. It is at the corner of a busy intersection.

Photograph

View from

Locus Map (north at top)

Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Smith – Brewer House, built ca. 1831, is a story-and-a-half wood frame single dwelling with a half Cape Cod plan. The center chimney has been removed and skylights have been added to the roof. The three-bay front façade contains an entrance tight on the northwest corner offset by two widely-spaced windows. The rear façade contains a center entrance and a oriel window, both late additions. A one-story wing with two windows on the front and a saltbox on the rear is a late 20th-century addition. It has a large brick chimney on its north end. The house is situated on a triangular half-acre parcel at the corner of the State Highway and Nauset Road. Its land, which had extended back to Minister Pond has been subdivided for single dwellings and a cottage colony.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In 1847, when Reuben Brewer acquired five acres at the intersection of the County and Nauset Roads, it was written that there was a house on the lot, and one was mentioned as well when Joseph Smith sold the same property to James G. Smith of Dennis and George Ward of Wellfleet in 1838.[1] Of all the Smiths in Eastham, this Joseph Smith is among the most obscure. The deed is signed by him and his wife Lurania H Smith. Lurania Higgins Steel had been born in Winchester, New Hampshire, to the Rev. Joel Steel and his wife Jerusha Rich Higgins, the latter of whom was a native of Wellfeet. In Eastham in 1831 she married Joseph Smith, and though no deed has been located that transfers property to him, he probably built the house that is now 3070 State Highway at the time of his marriage. The couple had two sons in Eastham, George W. in 1835 and Joseph W. in 1837. By 1840 the family had moved to Natick, where Joseph Smith, a clock maker, died of consumption in 1847. His birthplace is listed as Eastham, but his parents' names were left blank.[2]

The Smith had probably moved to Natick by 1840, because Reuben Brewer (1815-1904) is listed in this neighborhood in that year's Eastham census with two persons in his household. He probably rented the house. Brewer was one of the five children of North Carolina native Edward Brewer (ca 1780-by 1820) and his wife Mehitable Mayo Brewer (1784-1864). He was a mariner when he married Ruth Snow of Orleans early in 1847, and by 1850 the couple are listed with $406 in real property in a household with two-year-old daughter Almena Lewis Brewer (born in 1848 and shown in the 1850 census as Emma) and Brewer's mother. In 1859 son Luther Wilber was born. In February 1865 Ruth Snow Brewer died of typhoid, and from 1865 through 1880 the household included Reuben, by 1870 a fisherman, Almena, and Luther, who by 1880 was an apprentice to a harness maker.

In 1882 daughter Almena had a daughter, Blanche Allen, in Brockton (the birth is also listed in Eastham); the father is listed as John W. Brewer, of whom nothing yet has been learned; he was never part of the Eastham Brewer household. By 1900 son Luther had left the household, Reuben Brewer was farming, daughter Almena was a laundress, and granddaughter Blanche was eighteen. In 1902 the town taxed (but exempted) Brewer for a house valued at $450, a barn at $50, a shop at $40, a woodhouse at $20, and a henhouse at $40, and an unspecified amount of land. Reuben Brewer died in July 1904, and in November of the same year the *Barnstable Patriot* reported that Almena and Blanche "have closed their house and gone to Brockton for the winter." In 1905 Almena rented her father's house for the summer, but she and her daughter were back in Eastham in the fall, when Blanche was one of several Eastham young women who had picked cranberries on the "Brett Bog."[3] The 1905 map marks the 3070 State Highway house, mistakenly, as "E. Brewer." Through the 1910s she apparently continued to rent 3070 State Highway, as Cape newspapers reported her visits to her cousin Bertha and Bertha's husband William B. Higgins, and sometimes kept house for them.[4] And at some point, a postcard in the Eastham Historical Society collections documents, she ran the house as the "Hotel Almena."

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[1] George Ward, Wellfleet, to Reuben Brewer, 15 January 1847, BCD 41:356; Joseph Smith to James G. Smith, Dennis, and George Ward, Wellfleet, 16 April 1838, BCD 8:210.

[2] The Smiths had two more children in Natick, Maria Curtis in 1840 and Frances Ella in 1845. In 1850 the widowed Lurania Smith lived with her four children, her mother Jerusha R. Steel, and boarders in Natick. In 1859 son Joseph W., an upholsterer, married Maria Menard in boston, and by 1860 and 1865 most of the family is listed in Boston, with between two and six boarders; Jerusha Steel was part of the household in both censuses. Lurania Steel Smith die din Boston in 1883.

[3] "Eastham," *Barnstable Patriot*, 28 November 1904, 4; 24 July 1905, 4; and 30 October 1905, 4.

[4] See, for example, "North Eastham," *Barnstable Patriot*, 7 September 1914, 3. Bertha Howard Brewer (1879-1933) was the daughter of Jesse E. and Rosaltha Ellis Brewer and granddaughter of Edward Brewer (1809-81), Reuben Brewer's brother.

In 1907 Blanche Brewer, then working as a stitcher at a Brockton shoe factory, married Joseph L. Keefe, a shoe shop cutter born in Boston and living in Brockton. In 1910 they lived in Brockton with one-year-old daughter Bertha Ellen Keefe and Blanche's mother Almena, who worked as a housekeeper. In 1915 Joseph Keefe, reportedly despondent at losing his job, took his life, and by 1920 Almena, Blanche, and her daughter Bertha had returned to 3070 State Highway.[5] In that year Almena was doing laundry from home, and Blanche worked as a boardinghouse waitress. In 1926 Eastham taxed Brewer on a house valued at $1150, a barn and shed at $230, a shop at $115, and 16 acres.

Bertha A. Keefe graduated from Orleans High School in 1927 and went to Hyannis Normal School. By January 1930 she was an assistant in the Eastham school when she began to work with Ellyn Gross, who had recently married and intended to resign within the month. Gross taught first-graders, and Bertha Keefe taught first- and second-graders in Orleans through at least 1941. In 1930 she, her mother Blanche, by then also teaching school, and her grandmother were living in the State Highway house. In 1937 the town taxed Almena Brewer on a house assessed at $1200, a barn/shed at $230, a shop at $120, a 3.6-acre homestead lot, and 5.4 acres of woodland. In 1940 Brewer was ninety-one years old and living at 3070 State Highway with daughter Blanche, by then a town librarian, and granddaughter Bertha.

Almena Lewis Brewer died in April 1941, and in March 1966 Bertha Keefe registered the land in Land Court. She divided her property into five lots in 1984 and died in November 1985. Roughly two years later, after her death, the executor of her will sold 3070 State Highway and its lot to Michael and Florence H. Andras of Easton, Connecticut. The Andrases owned the property for a decade and sold it, after Michael Andras's death, to Sarah S. Dinsmore of North Truro. Dinsmore sold 3070 State Highway to Julie Christiansen of Woodstock, Connecticut, in 1999, and in 2008 Christiansen, by then married, transferred the title to herself and her husband Peter Allegra. They were the owners of record in 2020.[6]

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MAPS
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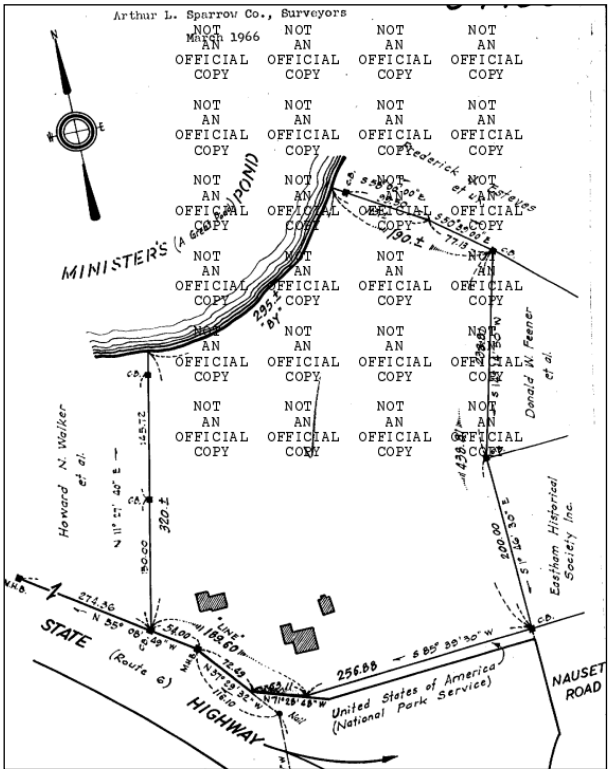
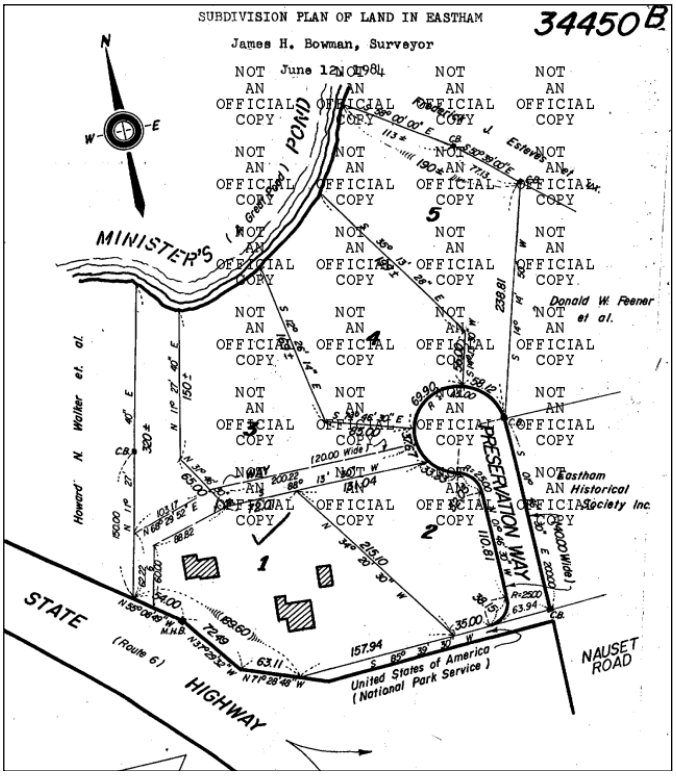
Atlas of Barnstable County, Massachusetts . . . from Official Plans and Actual Surveys. Boston: Walker Lithograph and Publishing Co., 1905, 1910.

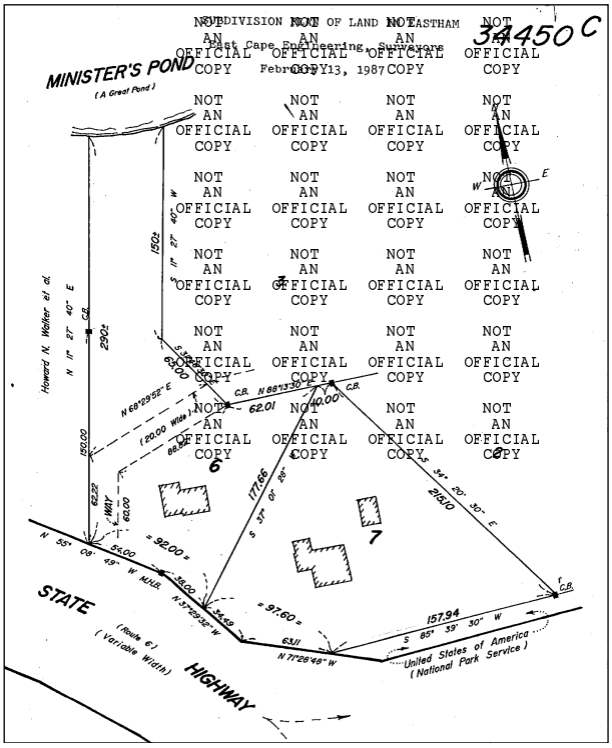
[5] "Suicide of J. L. Keefe," *Boston Daily Globe*, 16 May 1915, 171.
[6] Commonwealth of Massachusetts Land Court in re: petition 34450 of Bertha E. Keefe, 8 September 1967, Certificate of Title 40903; Cape Cod Bank and Trust Company, Hyannis, executor will Bertha E. Keefe, to Michael and Florence H. Andras, Easton CT, 6 November 1986, Certificate 108806; Florence H. Andras, Easton CT, to Sarah S. Dinsmore, North Truro, 30 May 1996, Certificate 140896; Sarah S. Dinsmore to to Julie Christiansen, Woodstock CT, 19 October 1999, Certificate 155230; Julia Allegra to Julie and Peter Allegra, 3070 State Highway, 13 June 2008, Certificate 186296. The house is depicted on "Plan of Land in Eastham," March 1966, LC 34450-A; on Lot 1 of "Subdivision Plan of Land in Eastham," 12 June 1984, LCP 34450-B; and on Lot 7 of "Subdivision Plan of Land in Eastham," 13 February 1987, LCP 34450-C.

SUPPLEMENTAL IMAGES





The house, its barn, and its outbuilding are shown on Bertha Keefe's 1966 plan (LCP 34450-A, left), on Lot 1 of her 1984 subdivision (LCP 34450-B, right), and on Lot 7 of 1987 Land Court Plan 34450-C (below).



PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)

View from NW.